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ABSTRACT

A Web-based survey on the core curriculum at Boise State University, Idaho, indicated that faculty thought the core was important, but the stated outcomes of the core were only marginally met. Approximately 50% of full-time faculty completed the survey. Based on the percentage who indicated that the outcome was being met adequately or well by the core curriculum, these outcomes received the highest ratings: (1) identify basic assumptions, concepts, theories, and facts in the subject area (72.4%); (2) understand and apply relevant methods and strategies of inquiry in the subject area (62.5%); and (3) identify and analyze a problem, and identify possible solutions (59.4%). Outcomes that received the lowest ratings were the ability to make comparisons among countries about creative accomplishments, the ability to write clearly and appropriately, and the ability to explain one's own cultural perspective and make meaningful comparisons with other cultures. Faculty who taught courses for which core was a prerequisite, but who did not teach core courses themselves provided the lowest ratings. Faculty who taught core courses provided higher ratings in a number of cases. Faculty also thought students lacked a positive view of core curriculum. Some faculty suggestions about reorganizing the core courses are discussed. (SLD)

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Research Reports

Institutional Assessment
Boise State University

Faculty Perceptions of the Core Curriculum

Research Report 2003-04
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Office of Institutional Assessment

Boise State University
July 2003

Abstract

A web-based survey on the core curriculum indicated that faculty thought that the core was important but the stated outcomes of the core were only marginally met. Approximately 50% of full-time faculty completed the survey.

Based on the percentage who indicated that the outcome was being met adequately or well by the core curriculum, the following outcomes received the highest ratings:

- Identify basic assumptions, concepts, theories, and facts in the subject area (72.4%)
- Understand and apply relevant methods and strategies of inquiry in the subject area (62.5%)
- Clearly identify and analyze a problem; identify possible solutions (59.4%)

The outcomes that received the lowest ratings were:

- Make comparisons between the creative accomplishments of their own and other cultures (45.4%)
- Write clearly and appropriately (47.3%)
- Explain their own cultural perspective and make meaningful comparisons between it and other cultures (49.0%)

Faculty who taught courses where core was a prerequisite but did not teach core courses themselves provided the lowest ratings. Faculty who taught core courses provided significantly higher ratings in a number of cases.

Though over 90% agreed that the core curriculum is an important part of students' educational experience and that they understood the value of the core curriculum, faculty also felt that students lacked a positive view of core. Only 22% of respondents agreed that their students understood the value of the core curriculum. Faculty were fairly evenly divided over whether the core curriculum needs a major overhaul.

No strong consensus emerged on any of the issues which the committee will be considering in the next year. Though the most common responses, still slightly less than 50% of respondents

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thought that quantitative skills should be addressed by separate outcomes, that the mathematics requirement should be removed from Area III and addressed in a similar fashion to the English requirement, and that all Area III core courses should continue to have a lab requirement. A weak majority of respondents (53%) felt that core courses should continue to be organized into Areas I, II, and III. About equal numbers felt that the core curriculum needed to focus more explicitly on diversity issues versus continuing with the current approach.

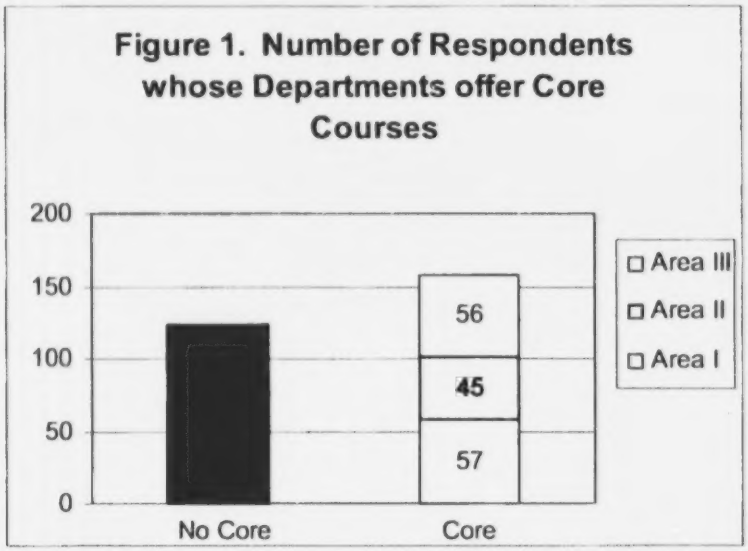
Faculty Perceptions of the Core Curriculum

Though general education requirements encompass about a third of the courses students must complete to earn a degree, little systematic attention is paid to the core curriculum *as a whole*, its effects on student learning, and faculty perceptions of the role and efficacy of core. Only the Core Curriculum Committee is charged with oversight of this major group of courses.

Therefore, as part of the assessment process, in the Spring of 2003 the Committee surveyed faculty on the core curriculum. The survey was delivered via the web. All personnel with e-mail accounts at the university received the invitation to complete the survey, though faculty were specifically asked to respond. Assuming that only full-time faculty followed the link to the website (perhaps a big assumption), 428 of the 537 full-time faculty (or 80%) visited the website. However, only two-thirds of those who visited the site also began the survey. Usable responses were obtained from 280 respondents or about 52% of full-time faculty.

Characteristics of Respondents

As shown by Figure 1, a majority of respondents (56%) hailed from departments which offered one or more core courses. The distribution across areas I, II, and III was fairly proportional.



A slim majority (51%) of respondents have taught core courses themselves. Of the 51% who have taught core, 36% most recently taught during this academic year, while 7% taught during the last academic year, and 8% have taught core but it had been more than two years. In addition, almost half (48%) have taught other courses that use core courses as prerequisites. These questions provide some insight into respondent's familiarity with at least part of the core curriculum.

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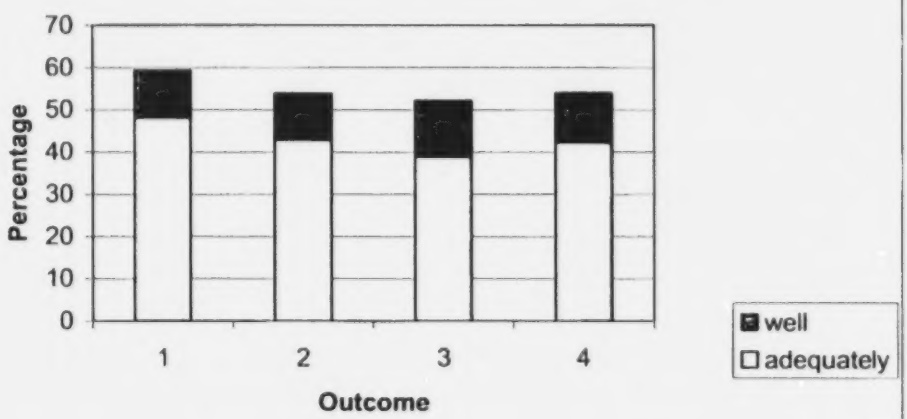
Using information from these two questions, we find that 48 respondents had neither taught core nor a course that used core as a prerequisite. An additional 45 faculty had taught courses where core was a prerequisite but not core courses themselves; 46 had taught a core course only, while 69 had both taught core courses and courses where core was a prerequisite to enrollment. These groupings will be employed to assess differences in perception of the core outcomes.

How Well Do Faculty Think Core Outcomes Are Being Met?

Currently, 18 outcomes have been identified for the core curriculum. These are the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that students should gain from completing their general education requirements. The outcomes have been grouped into four areas: Critical thinking/Problem-solving, Communication, Cultural Perspective, and Breadth of Knowledge/Intellectual Perspective. Respondents were asked how well the current curriculum addresses each outcome. They were given a four-point scale to respond where "poorly" was "1", "marginally" was "2", "adequately" was "3", and "well" was coded "4."

Critical Thinking included four outcomes. The percentage who thought each outcome was being met either adequately or well is shown in Figure 2 below. Full details can be found in Tables 1 and 2 at the end of the report.

Figure 2. Percentage who Thought Critical Thinking Outcomes were Met Adequately or Well



Outcomes:
1=Clearly identify and analyze a problem; identify possible solutions
2=Distinguish questions of fact from questions of value
3=Use, analyze, and evaluate arguments
4=Use numbers, graphs, or charts in reasoning

Note that slightly over half thought each outcome was being met at least adequately. Faculty thought that students were best at identifying and analyzing a problem and identifying possible solutions.

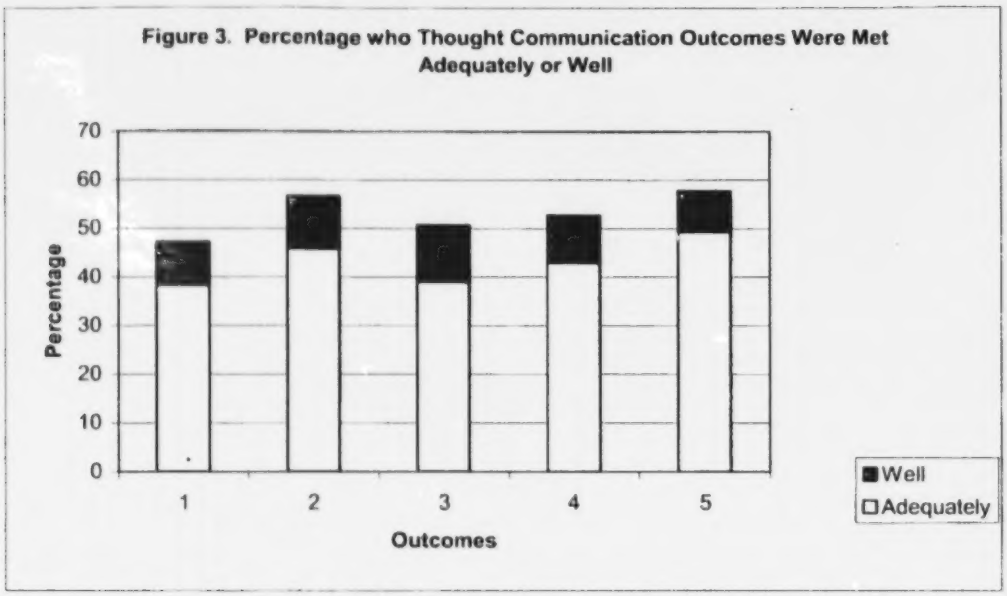
Faculty differed in their perceptions about how well the curriculum was meeting several of the outcomes depending upon whether they taught core courses or received students into their classes who first needed to complete a core course. In particular, faculty who only taught courses where core was a prerequisite provided significantly lower ratings on identifying and analyzing a problem and identifying possible solutions compared to faculty who either taught only core courses or who taught both. In addition, faculty who taught courses where core was a prerequisite provided significantly lower ratings on using numbers, graphs, or charts in reasoning compared to faculty who only taught core courses.

Faculty were also invited to comment on the critical thinking outcomes, and a few did so. Their responses are in Appendix A. Several themes emerged from the comments. The most frequent comment was that it was difficult to respond in generalities. Several faculty indicated that responses depended upon the subject area and who taught the course. As one faculty member noted, "These questions are far too general. Obviously, there are some core courses that do the above well and others not at all." Others felt they weren't familiar enough with what was happening outside their own subject area to be able to make a judgment. Several wrote that they would have liked to see a response option such as "No Basis for Response" or "N/A."

Most faculty who addressed their comments to students' critical thinking skills thought that they were weak in this area and that improving their skills was difficult. One faculty commented: "All my students have these troubles in my class and fight me when I try to get them to do this... It makes it difficult to teach." Another noted that "students frequently appear surprised that critical thinking is expected and that skills and knowledge from previous classes are required again." Several faculty thought the fault lay with how core courses were taught. One noted that "because most core classes are taught as large, lecture driven, survey courses there appears to be little opportunity for significant or sustained thinking." Another thought that "the problem here is the way some faculty use core cores as indoctrination devices."

A total of five outcomes were included under **communication skills**. Again, slightly more than half of respondents thought the current curriculum was addressing the outcomes either adequately or well. The one exception was for the outcome "Write clearly and appropriately" where slightly less than half thought this outcome was being adequately addressed. Figure 3 provides an overview.

Figure 3. Percentage who Thought Communication Outcomes Were Met Adequately or Well



Outcomes:
1=Write clearly and appropriately
2=Use speaking, listening, and interpersonal communication skills
3=Read, interpret, analyze, and evaluate written discourse
4=Interpret, analyze, and evaluate spoken discourse
5=Identify and make effective use of information sources

Again, faculty differed in their perceptions depending upon their teaching relationship to the core courses. Faculty who only taught courses where core was a prerequisite had significantly lower ratings on ability to read, interpret, analyze, and evaluate written discourse compared to all the other groups (including those who never taught core courses and those who had). The same group also provided significantly lower ratings on the effectiveness of the core in helping students identify and make effective use of information sources.

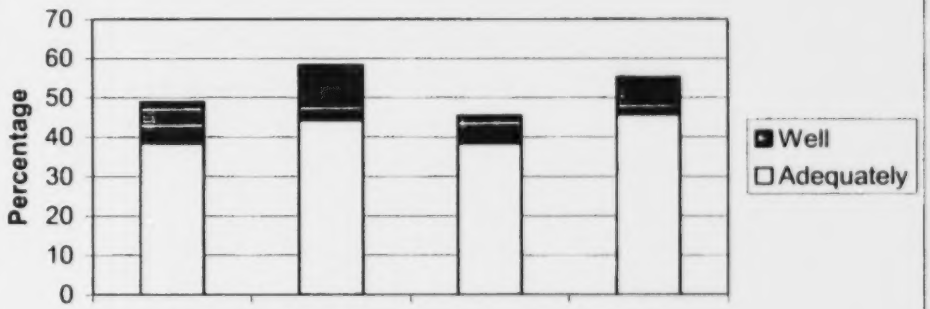
Comments related to the Communication Skills items mainly focused on the difficulty of improving communication in large core classes and the weak writing skills still seen at the upper division level. One faculty member wrote "Most core courses are too large to foster these important communication skills. How is it possible to improve writing and speaking skills in classes of 100+ students?" Another noted that "class size in many core classes makes the assessment of many of these skills virtually impossible. Objective examinations fail to assess most if not all of these skills."

Several faculty noted that the direction of the response scale had flipped (e.g., "well" was presented as the first response option instead of the last) and worried about the validity of the results. While this change was unintentional when constructing the survey, some authors recommend flipping the scale to discourage simply marking one column (e.g., all responses are "poor") without reading the items. To check for problems, the number of respondents who flipped from one extreme on the Critical Thinking items to the other extreme on the

Communication items was counted. While very few were found, this remains a concern in interpreting the results.

The **Cultural Perspective** area includes four outcomes related to understanding our own and other cultures along with an outcome on involved citizenship. Two outcomes had less than 50% of respondents agreeing that the curriculum was addressing the outcome adequately (see Figure 4). The ability to explain their own cultural perspective and make meaningful comparisons between it and other cultural perspectives was considered adequately by almost half (49.5%) while making comparisons between the creative accomplishments of their own and other cultures was considered adequate by 45.5%. No significant differences in responses were found depending on courses taught.

Figure 4. Percentage who Thought Cultural Perspective Outcomes were Met Adequately or Well



Outcomes:

1=Explain their own cultural perspective and make meaningful comparisons between it and other cultures

2=Gain greater self-awareness in regards to their own perspective and values

3=Make comparisons between the creative accomplishments of their own and other cultures

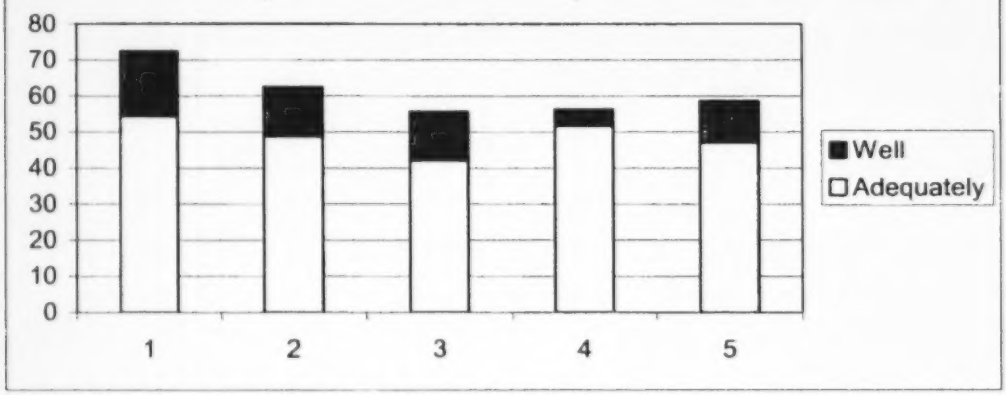
4=Recognize the choices and responsibilities of involved citizenship

Comments mainly focused on faculty's inability to respond knowledgeably or, if responding, student skill levels for this area. As one faculty member wrote, "Given the monochromatic demography of Idaho, both in terms of race and political beliefs, there simply are not that many alternative perspectives from which students might draw." See Appendix A for a full listing of comments.

The final outcome area—**Breadth of Knowledge and Intellectual Perspective**—focuses on the subject matter itself and gaining a general understanding and appreciation for the field. Respondents reserved their highest ratings for this area, as Figure 5 shows. Again, details can be

found in Tables 1 and 2. The comments are similar to those for the other areas (see Appendix A).

Figure 5. Percentage who Thought Breadth of Knowledge Outcomes Were Met Adequately or Well



Outcomes:
1=Identify basic assumptions, concepts, theories, and facts in the subject area
2=Understand and apply relevant methods and strategies of inquiry in the subject area
3=Apply problem-solving and communication skills relevant to this subject area
4=Identify similarities and differences between this and other subject areas
5=Appreciate the complexity and variety of opinions on important issues in this subject area

Again, differences in ratings were found depending upon courses taught. Faculty who taught only courses which received students who had completed the core prerequisites gave significantly lower ratings on understanding and applying relevant methods and strategies of inquiry in the subject area compared to faculty who taught only core courses. They also differed on applying problem-solving and communication skills with those teaching only courses where core was a prerequisite giving the lowest ratings and those teaching only core courses giving the highest.

What are faculty's general perceptions of the core?

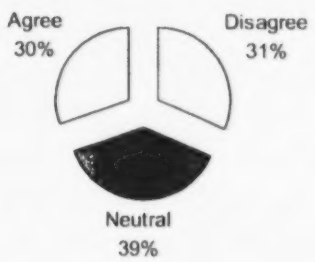
In a series of eight (8) Likert scale questions, faculty were asked about the importance of the core curriculum to themselves and their students (see Table 3). Generally, faculty thought that core was important. Over 90% agreed that the core curriculum is an important part of students' educational experience and that they understood the value of the core curriculum. Faculty felt, however, that students lacked such a positive view. Only 22% agreed that their students

understood the value of the core curriculum. Most (75%) felt, however, that students usually saw greater value in the core requirements several years after they have graduated.

Though 65% disagreed that the core is mainly a process of "jumping through hoops" to meet requirements, 21% felt this was the case. Only 6%, however, agreed that if we didn't have to meet accreditation requirements, they'd vote to get rid of the core. Slightly more than 10% of faculty said they get confused about core requirements for their majors, indicating that navigating the core requirements can be difficult for faculty advisors as well as for students.

Faculty may recall attempts during the 1990's to change the core curriculum. As shown by Figure 6 below, many faculty are now "fence-sitters" on the need for a major overhaul of the core curriculum. The remainder of respondents were about evenly divided between those who wanted to overhaul and core and those who did not.

Figure 6. Core Curriculum Needs Major Overhaul



Issues Faced by the Core Curriculum Committee

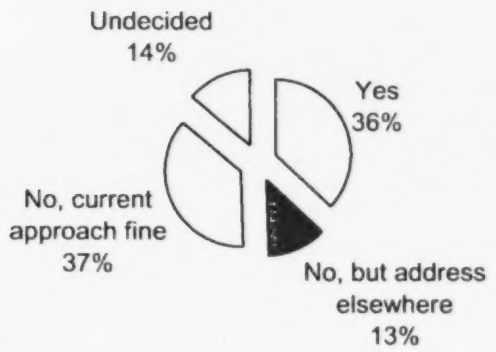
Throughout the past year, Core Curriculum Committee members have grappled with several issues related to organization of core courses. One issue involves the mathematics requirement that was implemented two years ago. Currently, only one outcome specifically addresses quantitative skills and that outcome has been subsumed under the Critical Thinking category. Committee members wanted to know if quantitative skills should be subsumed as only one outcome under Critical Thinking or if quantitative skills should be a separate area with more outcomes. While the largest group (43%) was uncertain, 40% thought moving quantitative skills to a separate area should be undertaken. Only 18% were opposed to such a move.

In a related matter, most (47%) thought that the mathematics requirement should be removed from Area III and addressed separately in the same way the English requirements are. Of the remainder, 23% were opposed and 30% were uncertain.

Another issue faced by the committee was whether or not all Area III (natural science) courses should continue to have a lab requirement. The difficulty arose when the committee approved a new core course from Engineering. Committee members gave their approval without considering that the new Area III course lacked a lab requirement. The largest group of respondents (43%) felt that all Area III core courses should continue to have a lab requirement. Another 30% were uncertain, while 27% felt that this requirement should be set aside.

A proposed diversity requirement has also been presented to the Committee during the past year. When the survey asked if the core curriculum needed to focus more explicitly on diversity issues, respondents were divided in their reactions (see Figure 7 below). However, almost half of the respondents thought that diversity issues needed to be more strongly addressed either in the core (36%) or elsewhere in the curriculum (13%). Slightly more than a third (37%) felt that the current approach was just fine.

Figure 7. Does the Core Curriculum Need to Focus More Explicitly on Diversity Issues



In addition, more interdisciplinary courses are being proposed for inclusion in the core curriculum that cross Area I, II, and III boundaries (e.g., a physical anthropology course with a lab requirement), causing committee members to reconsider how courses should be organized within the core. The Area I, II, and III designation now used organizes courses by academic discipline. A majority of respondents (53.5%) felt that we should continue to use that approach. A substantial minority (28%), however, thought that a better approach would be to organize the core courses under the primary core outcome emphasized by the course (e.g., effective communication, critical thinking, etc.). Only 4-6% of respondents selected the remaining options: organizing core by its treatment of knowledge (acquisition, understanding, appreciation, etc.), by its type of acquisition of knowledge (e.g., review of theory/findings, hands-on discovery, etc.), or by its pursuit (e.g., factual knowledge, beauty, understanding, hypotheses, etc.).

Comments on questions asked can be found in Appendix A. Opinions ranged from "Please don't waste any more faculty time reinventing a wheel that the university won't use anyway" to "The Core is too restrictive and should be drastically changed..." Some faculty had difficulty envisioning the alternative ways to organize the core, due to the jargon used.

Summary and Conclusions

While faculty believe in the value of the core curriculum in general, they also are lukewarm about how well stated outcomes are being met. Less than 60% agreed that any of the 13 outcomes in the Critical Thinking, Communication Skills, and Cultural Perspective areas was being met adequately or well. For three outcomes, the figure fell below 50%. Of the outcomes subsumed under Breadth of Knowledge (i.e., subject matter outcomes), slightly over 70% felt that students could adequately identify basic assumptions, concepts, theories, and facts in the subject area—the highest rating for any outcome. Other Breadth-of-Knowledge outcome ratings were similar to those found for other areas.

Faculty differed on how well the outcomes were being addressed based upon which courses they taught. Those who taught courses where a core course was a prerequisite provided the lowest ratings, while those who taught the core courses themselves provided the most positive ratings.

No strong consensus emerged on any of the issues which the committee will be considering in the next year. Slightly less than 50% of respondents thought that quantitative skills should be addressed by separate outcomes, that the mathematics requirement should be removed from Area III and addressed in a similar fashion to the English requirement, and that all Area III core courses should continue to have a lab requirement. A weak majority of respondents (53%) felt that core courses should continue to be organized into Areas I, II, and III. About equal numbers felt that the core curriculum needed to focus more explicitly on diversity issues (36%) or to continue with current approach (37%).

Consensus was found among faculty on student perceptions of the core. Only about 20% thought that students understood the value of the core curriculum during their time at Boise State, though a majority felt that students understood the value of core better after maturing and having some experiences after graduation.

Table 1. Frequency Counts for How Well the Current Curriculum is Addressing Core Outcomes

	1 Poorly		2 Marginally		3 Adequately		4 Well	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Critical Thinking								
Clearly identify and analyze a problem; identify possible solutions	15	7.1%	71	33.5%	102	48.1%	24	11.3%
Distinguish questions of fact from questions of value	12	5.8%	84	40.4%	89	42.8%	23	11.1%
Use, analyze, and evaluate arguments	20	9.5%	81	38.4%	82	38.9%	28	13.3%
Use numbers, graphs, or charts in reasoning	22	10.8%	72	35.3%	86	42.2%	24	11.8%
Communication								
Write clearly and appropriately	30	14.0%	83	38.8%	82	38.3%	19	8.9%
Use speaking, listening, and interpersonal communication skills	16	7.5%	76	35.8%	97	45.8%	23	10.8%
Read, interpret, analyze, and evaluate written discourse	23	10.9%	81	38.4%	82	38.9%	25	11.8%
Interpret, analyze, and evaluate spoken discourse	18	8.8%	79	38.5%	88	42.9%	20	9.8%
Identify and make effective use of information sources	15	7.1%	74	35.1%	104	49.3%	18	8.5%
Cultural Perspective								

	1 Poorly		2 Marginally		3 Adequately		4 Well	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Explain their own cultural perspective & make meaningful comparisons between it and other cultures	32	16.2%	69	34.8%	76	38.4%	21	10.6%
Gain greater self-awareness in regards to their own perspective and values	15	7.6%	67	34.0%	87	44.2%	28	14.2%
Make comparisons between the creative accomplishments of their own and other cultures	37	18.9%	70	35.7%	75	38.3%	14	7.1%
Recognize the choices and responsibilities of involved citizenship	27	13.6%	62	31.2%	91	45.7%	19	9.5%
Breadth of Knowledge and Intellectual Perspective								
Identify basic assumptions, concepts, theories, and facts in subject area	9	4.4%	48	23.3%	112	54.4%	37	18.0%
Understand and apply relevant methods and strategies of inquiry in subject area	13	6.3%	64	31.2%	100	48.8%	28	13.7%
Apply problem-solving and communication skills relevant to this subject area	15	7.3%	76	37.1%	86	42.0%	28	13.7%
Identify similarities and differences between this and other subject areas	13	6.6%	73	37.1%	102	51.8%	9	4.6%
Appreciate the complexity and variety of opinions on important issues in this subject area	22	11.1%	60	30.3%	93	47.0%	23	11.6%

Table 2. Mean Responses to How Well the Current Curriculum is Addressing Core Outcomes

Outcome:	Mean	Standard Error of Mean	Std Deviation
Clearly identify and analyze a problem; identify possible solutions	2.64	.05	.78
Distinguish questions of fact from questions of value	2.59	.05	.76
Use, analyze, and evaluate arguments	2.56	.06	.84
Use numbers, graphs, or charts in reasoning	2.55	.06	.84
Write clearly and appropriately	2.42	.06	.84
Use speaking, listening, and interpersonal communication skills	2.60	.05	.78
Read, interpret, analyze, and evaluate written discourse	2.52	.06	.84
Interpret, analyze, and evaluate spoken discourse	2.54	.06	.79
Identify and make effective use of information sources	2.59	.05	.75
Explain their own cultural perspective & make meaningful comparisons between it and other cultures	2.43	.06	.89
Gain greater self-awareness in regards to their own perspective and values	2.65	.06	.82
Make comparisons between the creative accomplishments of their own and other cultures	2.34	.06	.86

Outcome:	Mean	Standard Error of Mean	Std Deviation
Recognize the choices and responsibilities of involved citizenship	2.51	.06	.85
Identify basic assumptions, concepts, theories, and facts in subject area	2.86	.05	.76
Understand and apply relevant methods and strategies of inquiry in subject area	2.70	.05	.78
Apply problem-solving and communication skills relevant to this subject area	2.62	.06	.81
Identify similarities and differences between this and other subject areas	2.54	.05	.69
Appreciate the complexity and variety of opinions on important issues in this subject area	2.59	.06	.84

Table 3. Frequency Distribution for General Items on the Core

	1 Strongly disagree		2 Disagree		3 Neutral		4 Agree		5 Strongly agree	
	N	Pct	N	Pct	N	Pct	N	Pct	N	Pct
The core curriculum is an important part of students' educational experience	3	1.4%	4	1.8%	15	6.8%	70	32.0%	127	58.0%
I understand the value of the core curriculum	2	.9%	4	1.8%	8	3.6%	90	40.9%	116	52.7%
My students understand the value of the core curriculum	10	4.7%	78	36.3%	80	37.2%	41	19.1%	6	2.8%
Students usually see greater value of the core several years after they have graduated	3	1.4%	7	3.3%	42	20.0%	121	57.6%	37	17.6%
Core is mainly a process of "jumping through hoops" to meet requirements	57	26.3%	84	38.7%	31	14.3%	36	16.6%	9	4.1%
The core curriculum needs a major overhaul	11	5.1%	56	26.2%	82	38.3%	39	18.2%	26	12.1%
If we didn't have to meet accreditation requirements, I'd vote to get rid of the core	116	53.7%	66	30.6%	21	9.7%	7	3.2%	6	2.8%
I get confused about core requirements for my majors	88	40.7%	67	31.0%	37	17.1%	20	9.3%	4	1.9%

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Appendix A

Core Curriculum Course Survey Responses

Comments about the communication outcomes:

- Core courses are far too large to do this as well as should be don.
- I give assignments and they can go to the library to get answers but the don't one does the work while others cheat!
- Too much Internet and MORE of all of the above
- Technical writing skills are poor.
- In the case of our core course is far too large to have the kind of interactions described by the above questions.
- Even at the junior/senior level, and sometimes graduate level, students are poor spellers and make structure/grammar errors repeatedly.
- I have marked my answers based on what I see in my classroom. I have no idea of what I am seeing is a reflection of the core classes or not.
- Cf. previous comment. (Wow, the scale was "flopped"--potentially confusing!)
- Good students do these things well, in my experience; not so good students, not so well.
- Student writing is marginal at best.
- Same comment as before.
- Communications skills are weak for the engineering students. They need more practice and more training in developing these skills.
- You reversed the layout?? "Well" to "Poorly" changed positions. Your survey results are questionable!
- Again, I have students who have little knowledge and experience with research, critical reading, and evidence-based writing and conclusions.
- The COMM 101 course focuses on addressing all these needs. I'm not sure if one class can accomplish all these needs, though.
- Other communication skills that should be encouraged include using measured numbers and relationship formulas for quantitative communication and pictures and drawing for visual communication.
- I'm thinking of mathematics courses here.
- Students are not learning how to write complete sentences. When some are in their 3rd or 4th year at Boise State, they still write run-on sentences, use improper syntax, and can't spell!
- same observation - depends upon the set of courses - unfortunately many core courses are offered by adjuncts and there may not be sufficient attention in those courses
- I don't know
- Most core courses are too large to foster these important communication skills. How is it possible to improve writing and speaking skills in classes of 100+ students?
- I can only comment on reading and writing. I don't make a lot of use of references, and I don't have a good feeling for the effect of the students' educations on their speaking and listening.
- Again, speaking only of the core mathematics courses.
- Class size in many core classes makes the assessment of many of these skills virtually impossible. Objective examinations fail to assess most if not all of these skills
- As from other comment, not really in a position to measure the students ability in this area.
- Many students have poor grammar skills and consequently less than adequate writing skills. They are unable to effectively communicate their position in writing.
- These are based upon observations of the lower performing students.
- Increases in student enrollment and class sizes has made this aspect of the core much more difficult
- depends on course

Comments about the critical thinking section of this survey:

- all my students have these troubles in my class and fight me when I try to get them to do this... it makes it difficult to teach.
- More reasoning with numbers, critical reasoning, problem solving
- N/A
- I believe our presentations are at least adequate, but I am conscious that many students do not really ENGAGE the course agendas.
- These questions are far too general. Obviously, there are some core courses that do the above well and others not at all.
- With Area III courses we need to make sure that the inclusion of too much subject matter doesn't overwhelm time/energy spent on critical thinking.
- Why is this set of answers opposite to the others that follow, scared me for a minute and I had to come back to make certain I answered correctly.
- My responses reflect core courses in Philosophy; I don't have sufficient familiarity with the courses offered by other departments to comment on them.
- I'm in mathematics, so the value/fact issue doesn't often arise. I assume that it does in other areas.
- Students are easily swayed by misinformation because they cannot spot the flaws in logic.
- Students frequently appear surprised that critical thinking is expected and that skills and knowledge from previous classes are required again.
- I'm not familiar enough with them to know as I teach in program specific courses (nursing).It sounds like a lot of what you are asking is teaching methodology, not curricular content.
- You are asking us to generalize over the entire core. Some classes do a great job others not as good. I would say it is mostly due to the individual faculty members.
- I'm not certain if you're asking for my reaction to students generally or my sense of whether or not these items are addressed in the core classes I teach.
- In general, most of my students simply aren't very critical. They are far to accepting of all information from all sources...at least to my way of thinking.
- You should include a "No Basis for Response" option for each topic.
- Because most Core classes are taught as large, lecture driven, survey courses there appears to be little opportunity for significant or sustained thinking.
- By the time I see the students, as junior engineering students, they have had sufficient experience to identify and analyze problems and use chart/graph reasoning.
- I have many seniors whose writing ability is dismal. They have difficulty logically sequencing their thoughts and ideas. Many times their arguments are biased and poorly reasoned.
- This is hard for me to judge, as I am teaching senior/grad level courses
- the problem here is the way some faculty use core cores as indoctrination devices
- too much computation oriented in math
- I am continually amazed by the primitive level of math that students bring to their courses. I had a student who could not add 8 plus 6.
- Core seems to have no impact and is not remembered
- my core classes are in Spanish, and I feel that the answer "N/A" would be applicable to several of the questions here...
- this really depends upon the class - I know it is the case for the core classes that are offered within my department, but do think that there are core classes on campus where this is not the case
- I don't know
- My ratings are influenced by the fact that I look at the performance of students in these categories in mathematics. I might feel differently if I were teaching a different subject.
- My judgment may be colored by the fact that I see outcomes in mathematics. If I were teaching a different discipline, I might have a better opinion.
- These answers reflect only my perceptions of core courses offered by the mathematics department.
- critical thinking should also stress independence of thought and ability to express ideas in a discursive

manner----thesis, antithesis and synthesis.

- Our students take core classes at the end of their technical classes, so I do not really have a way to measure/determine the quality of the above questions.
- With students from so many different backgrounds and so many different levels of preparation, I really don't know how well the core prepares students. Sorry
- depends on course

Comments about the breadth of knowledge outcomes:

- Too few students come adequately prepared in their secondary education. Too often I feel as if I'm doing REMEDIAL education.
- I have no idea.
- (The scale is "flopped" yet again! I'd be worried about the results of this survey.)
- All of these questions are too dependent on the specific context of the particular core class to answer.
- Teaching methodology is difficult when students are still grappling with basic information. I try to combine the two but work against their desire to know "the answer".
- Same comment as before. From looking at the course titles, however, I think there is adequate breadth and depth in these introductory courses.
- We still have an elitist attitude in the Math department and some areas of science. Students should not feel threatened taking courses in these areas.
- Students are generally extremely weak in Area III with respect to thinking and problem solving. It appears most of the courses emphasize regurgitation rather than inquiry.
- You changed the order of the answers again!!
- This addresses more of what I care about in the core.
- As discussed above, the laboratory portion of the Area III courses are essential to accomplish above objectives.
- Again, depending on the instructor's skills and level of commitment, these can be accomplished well or marginally.
- Order of categories switched again here... very confusing to the survey taker.
- I don't know
- These are more conceptual in nature, and lend themselves well to a didactic delivery technique.
- Issues of relationships with other areas (on the plane of similarity and difference) seldom come up in math; issues about differences of opinion in mathematics seldom come up in most classes.
- These opinions only for math courses.
- Again, the size of the classes mitigates against much of this below upper division classes
- as above
- I am not sure that the core as it is currently structured could possibly achieve these goals.
- depends on course
- I can't judge students' abilities for other subject areas, hence for the core as a whole.

Comments – Interdisciplinary Courses

- Thanks
- I'd like to discard the term "core". ENGL-101-102 remains the only true "core" course sequence. The rest seems to be "distributed-education" requirements.
- This one is really hard to choose but outcomes seems to be the most appropriate.
- Sorry, I cannot speak to this topic in a meaningful manner.
- Interdisciplinary courses would be a wonderful addition to the core experience. I strongly support adding interdisciplinary work to the core.
- I have no idea what the four options mean other than academic discipline. The last three options are particularly obscure and full of jargon.
- Seems like this section is trying to change the present classification of area III and I am against that
- Add American Sign Language to fulfill Area I Core under Modern Languages.
- I think core opportunities should allow for interdisciplinary and team teaching. We should approach the course of study through themes. There should be mandatory courses addressing diversity.
- Your examples don't help much--a science course without a lab is a science course, and a social science course with a lab is a social science course.
- This is abstract and hard to imagine without examples and knowing more.
- This is an interesting question and I rather like both the second and third suggestions. It's something I need to ponder...
- Students need to experience a lab as part of their science courses.
- When organized in terms of "outcome," there is a lovely clarity even in catalog terminology, as to why the requirement exists.
- The Core is too restrictive and should be drastically changed. Almost (and possibly) all lower division courses should count. There should just be a General Education Requirement.
- Please don't waste any more faculty time reinventing a wheel that the university won't use anyway.
- Labs are one of our few links to reality.
- interdisciplinary courses may require us to award half-credits toward core areas...

Comments - cultural perspectives outcomes:

- Much More multicultural/transnational--in and out of class
- These things don't belong much in the courses I teach. I do try to mention historical growth of the subject, but citizenship, for instance, is not DIRECTLY a part of my courses' menu.
- Idaho students are still pretty isolated in terms of familiarity with other cultures. They have passing knowledge of the cultures and more often than not look at them as exotics, rather than peers.
- Once again.....I do not know if what I am seeing in the classroom is a reflection of the core curriculum.
- I believe that we need to address questions relating to cultural perspectives through specific core requirements.
- I cannot comment intelligently on this outcome.
- Again, I don't really have a chance to evaluate these in mathematics classes.
- Most of my students are appallingly ignorant of other cultures, and especially of cultures in other periods of history.
- Given the monochromatic demography of Idaho, both in terms of race and political beliefs, there simply are not that many alternative perspectives from which students might draw.
- I have no opinion.
- Students need to know more about western history and culture.
- I believe that we do an adequate job presenting students with these options but we cannot make them develop open minds.

- I find this hard to answer; I'm not sure I know enough about the students to say in this area.
- If the students have had a course which incorporates lived experiences, Service-Learning, or similar pedagogy, the student outcomes in these areas are improved.
- ANTH 102 Cultural Anthropology seems to address #1 above. #2 and #3 are hit and miss throughout the core, but #4 seriously needs addressing.
- None of these outcomes are used or observed in our courses
- How exactly is curriculum being used in this sense? I mean my department sets guidelines, but everyone develops their own syllabus and selects their own books.
- Depending on the instructor, our courses are well constructed to do these things.
- My previous "well" scored page was due to reversal of scale; I meant to score "poorly"
- Math again.
- I don't know
- Some core classes (especially in Area III) are not designed to deal with these issues. Those in Areas I and II seem to do an appropriate job with these issues.
- I cannot comment on any of these questions.
- See above, re math courses
- as above
- depends on course
- see prior qualifications

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